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CEREBUS
mothers & daughters
24

ARTEMIS

174
SEP

NOTE • FROM • THE PRESIDENT

The point Martin Wagner was making was that publishing, like drawing and writing has to be in your blood. He used to photocopy his amateur super-hero strips at his dad's office when he was a kid. It's an interesting point. For some of us writing and drawing was only part of our interest in comic books. The other part, which was just as important, was reproducing and circulating our work. For most, editors and publishers are the missing part of the equation; the mystical beings who will turn their finished pages into comic books and a cheque. For others of us, they're the ones who hog some of the best toys in the sandbox. Our sandbox. The exact percentage of people who think one way rather than the other is still determined, I think, by happenstance. But it is something to think about.

★★★★★★★★★★

One thing that I wish a lot of self-publishers (or rather would-be-self-publishers) would lose is the notion that a professional cartoonist's opinion of your work has any validity whatsoever. I understand the motivation in taking a portfolio of pages to a convention and asking every professional there for a critique, but this only reinforces what I consider one of the biggest misapprehensions of aspiring cartoonists attempting to enter the field; that the field is somehow authoritarian or that there are authorities within it who can give you a definitive answer as to whether you've got what it takes or not. You're the only one with the answer to that question. The implications of that are very difficult for most people to deal with. The comic book field is not a university, it's not an art college, it's not a hierarchical system in any way shape or form. The ideal, the thing you want most of all, is to have a large enough audience to permit you to continue writing and drawing comic books. That's it. Don't bother filling out an application; there isn't one. You can be an apprentice if you want, but the odds are pretty good that you're going to have to unlearn everything you thought you learned once you actually sit down to do your own stuff. The cliche (which isn't a cliche, it's the truth) is that you have two thousand bad pages in you and until you draw them, you won't start producing good pages. Now, that should be very simple but an aspiring cartoonist will do everything in his power to ignore it. I was not, to say the least, well thought-of in the comic book field (when I was thought-of at all) for the first ten years I was in it. In Southern Ontario alone there were a dozen guys who had success written all over them; guys with natural ability, a smoother finish, better story-telling. The difference was they didn't stick with it. While I was producing pages, they were noodling laborious drawings in their sketchbooks that would put Bernie Wrightson to shame, doing preliminary studies of interiors for a comic book they intended to draw somewhere off in the future; model sheets with dozens of variations of incidental characters, air-brushed presentation pieces and cover designs, twenty-different logos for twenty different formats. They would draw everything in the world except page one, panel one. I would finish a five page story and decide that it stunk on ice, so I'd start another one; I wouldn't redraw that one, I'd start another one. One of the biggest breakthroughs I had was getting a wall calendar; one of those ones with big squares for each day. At the end of the day, I'd write in what I had done that day. At first it would be 'Resurrection' page one (pencil). After a while I wouldn't write anything down unless I had finished it; pencilled, inked and lettered. You guessed it; suddenly there were an awful lot of blank squares. I had to work a lot harder to actually be able to write something in there at the end of the day. A lot harder. But I realized I had been kidding myself; twenty-five days of uninterrupted work where eight of those days consisted of 'pencil rough for editorial cartoon' or 'Revolt 3000 character designs' is twenty-five days of self-deception. Stop trying to fool yourself. If you're a lazy, unproductive wuss, you're going to be better off knowing that before you quit your day job, aren't you?

At the end of every day (EVERY day) sit down and look at what you've accomplished and if you've actually produced something write it into that little square. In ink.

If you haven't produced shit, kick your lazy ass off to bed and hit the drawing board like a bat out of hell the next morning. Early the next morning. And keep doing that until you end up with a year's worth of squares that all have something written in them. In ink.

And don't waste a single one of those days going to some lame-ass convention to show any of your two thousand bad pages to somebody who's trying to come up with rent money. Page two thousand and one? No problem, but believe me. By the time you have that page done, what someone else thinks of it will be the least of your worries.

Hey! Just as we were going to press last issue, I found out that Cerebus *had won the 1992 Comics Creators Guild Award for Best Monthly Comic! Thanks to everyone who voted for us!*

CEREBUS
NO. 174 SEPTEMBER 1993

DAVE SIM
President

GERHARD
Vice-President

LINDA BERZINS
Typesetting

MOTHERS & DAUGHTERS
a novel

•

BOOK ONE
(Cerebus 151 to Cerebus 162)
Flight

•

BOOK TWO
(Cerebus 163 to Cerebus 174)
Women

•

BOOK THREE
(Cerebus 175 to Cerebus 188)

•

BOOK FOUR
(Cerebus 189 to Cerebus 200)

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no!
must
uh
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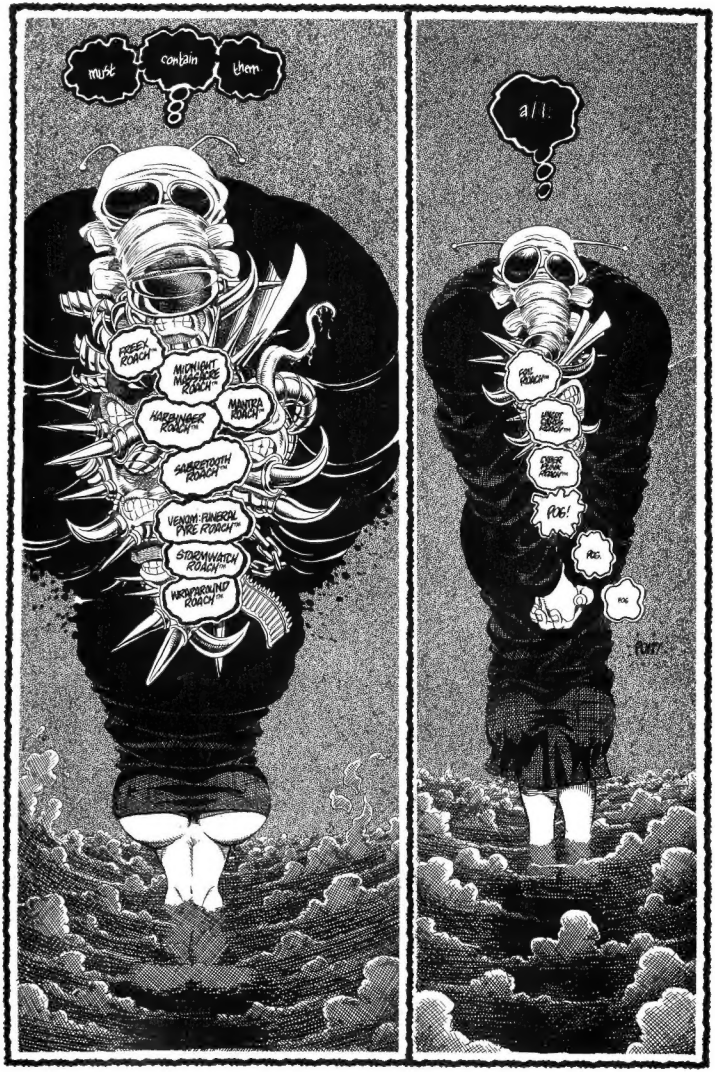
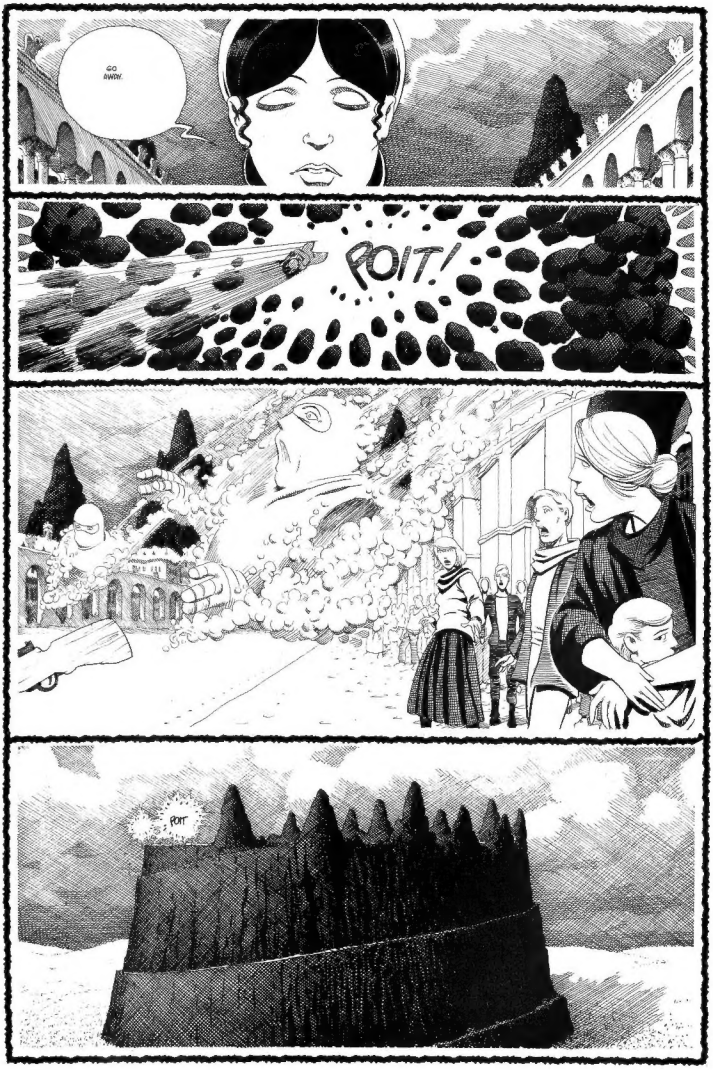
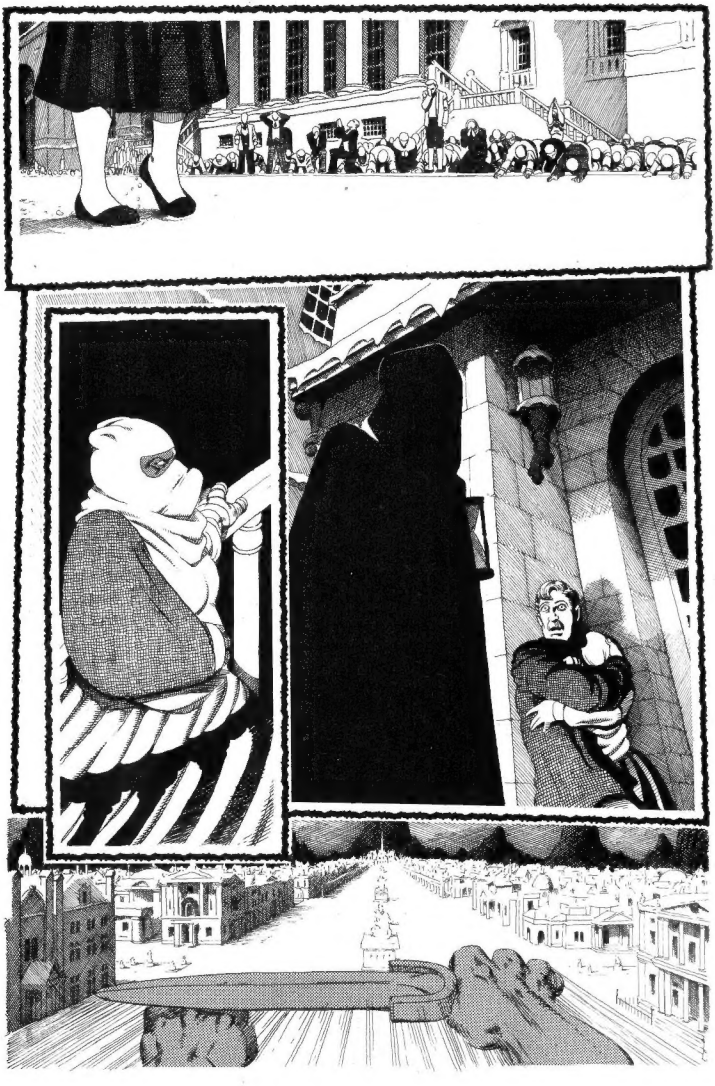

must
contain
them
FREEX ROACH™
MIDNIGHT MASSACRE ROACH™
MANTRA ROACH™
HARBINGER ROACH™
SABRETOOTH ROACH™
VENOM: FINEON, PYKE ROACH™
STORMWATCH ROACH™
WARMARVLND ROACH™
all.
PYKE ROACH™
HARBINGER ROACH™
SABRETOOTH ROACH™
POP!
POP.
POP.
FLUFF

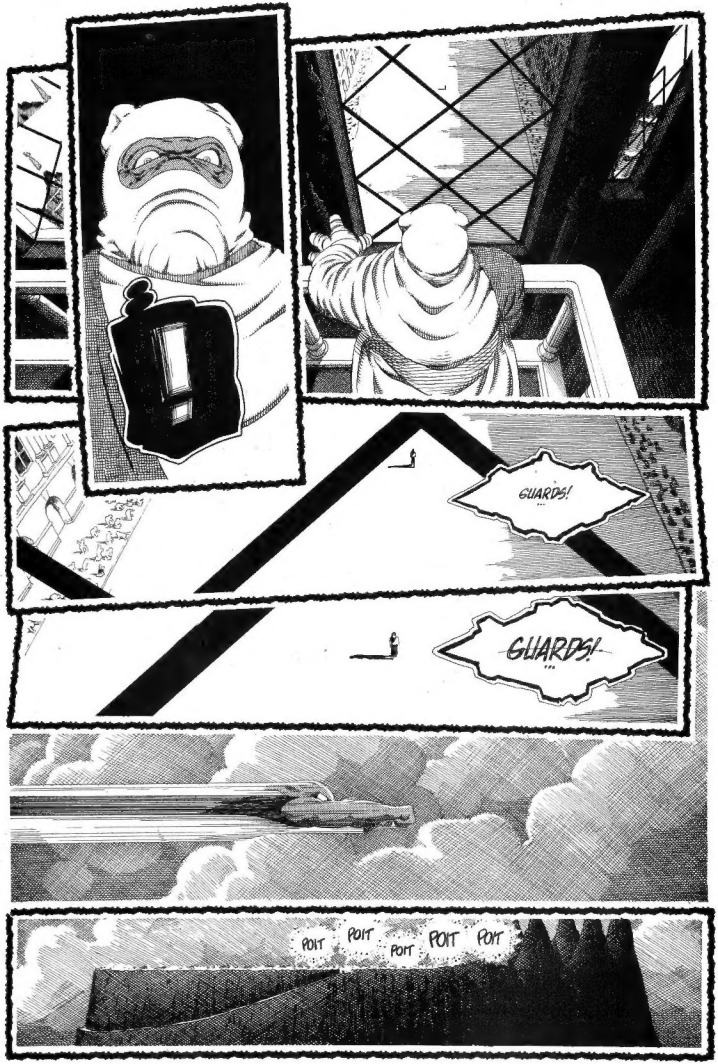
calm.

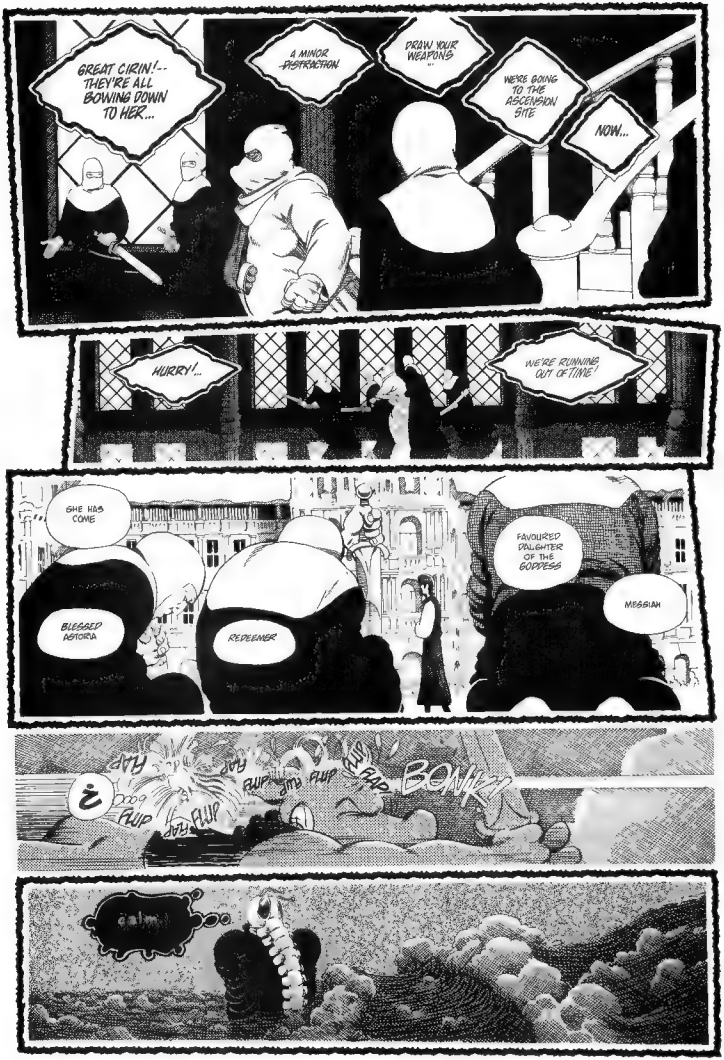

GO AWAY.
POIT!
POIT

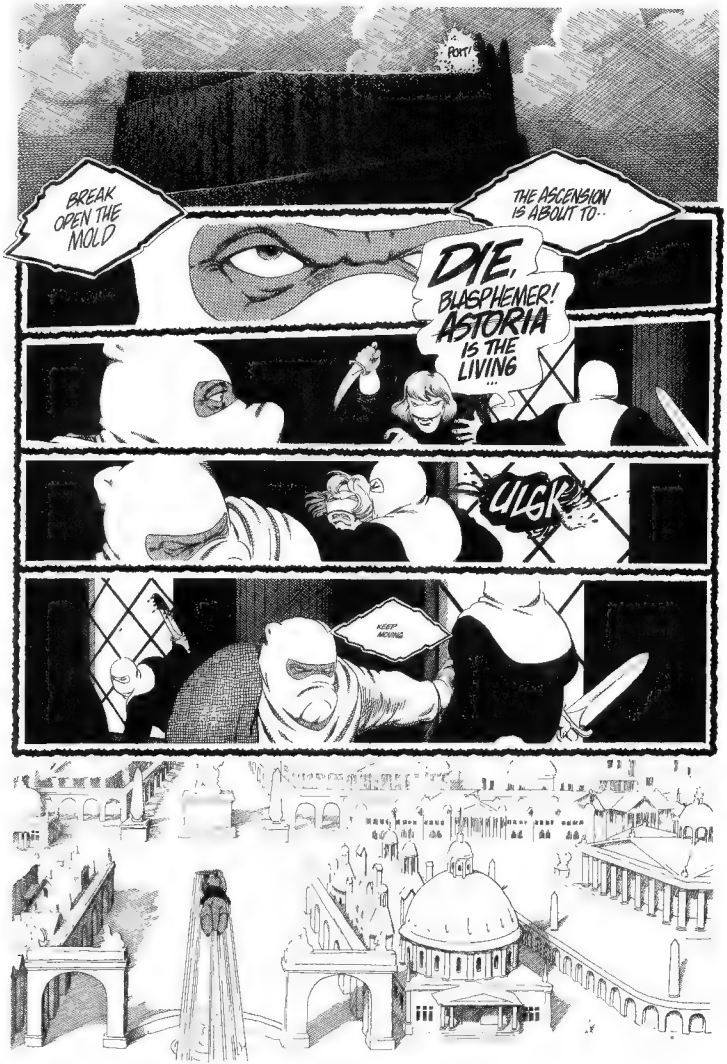
?!
WELL?
IS SHE ... DEAD.
REDEEMER
MESSIAH
LIBERATOR
GODDESS.
MESSIAH
MESSIAH.
calm.

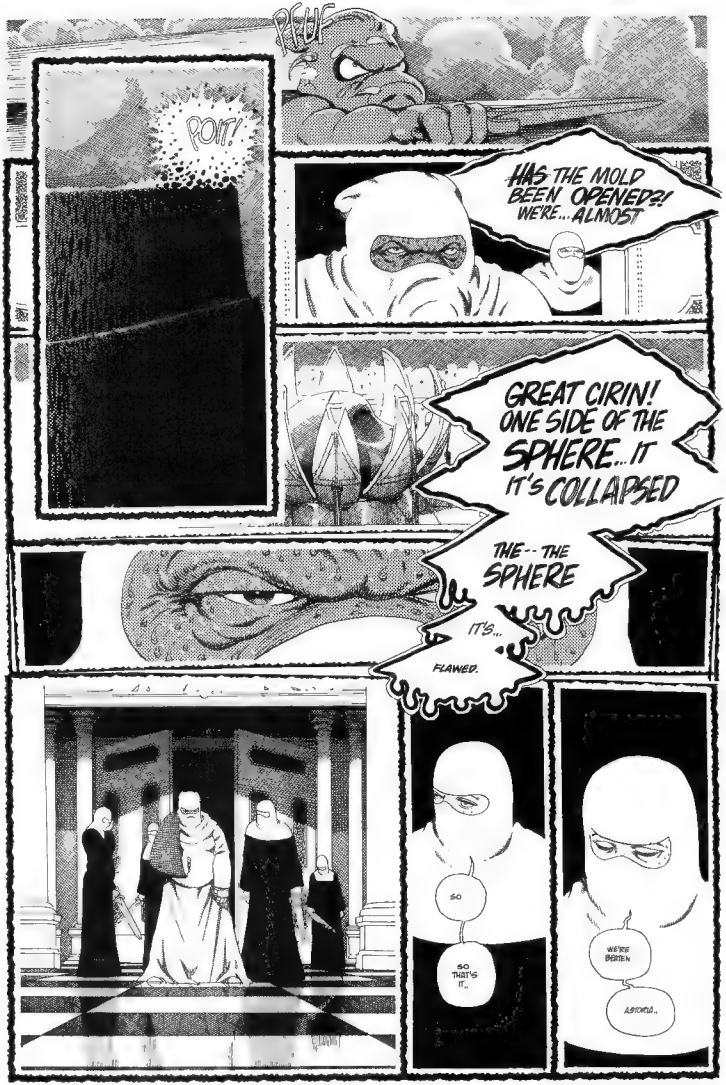
POIT
POIT
POIT

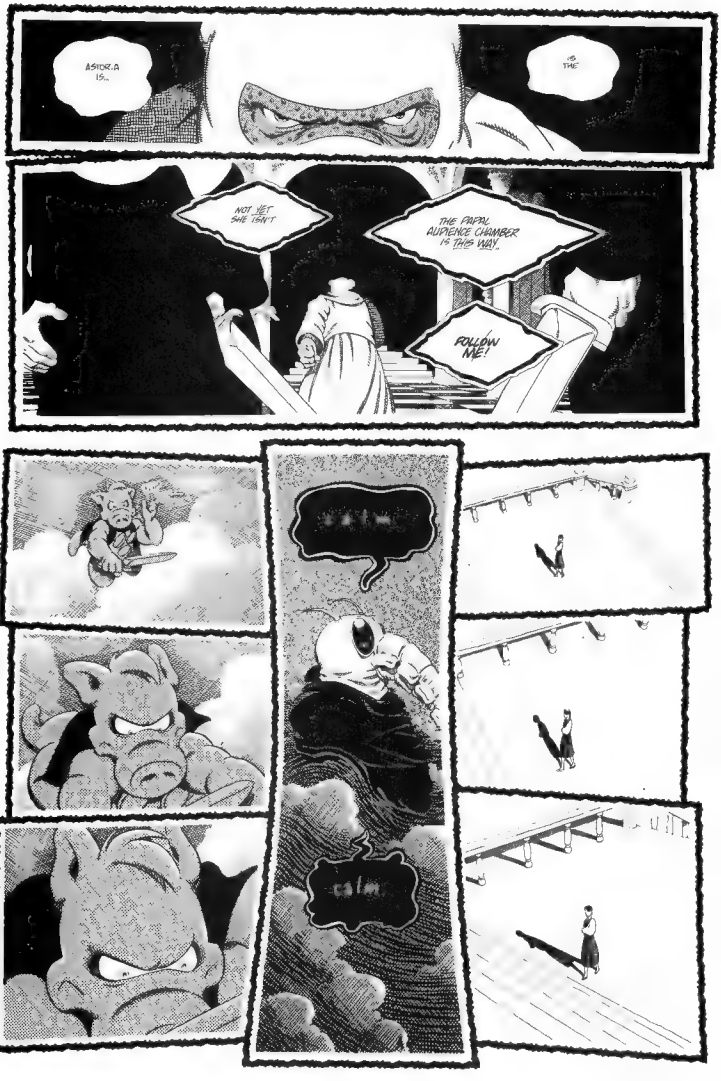


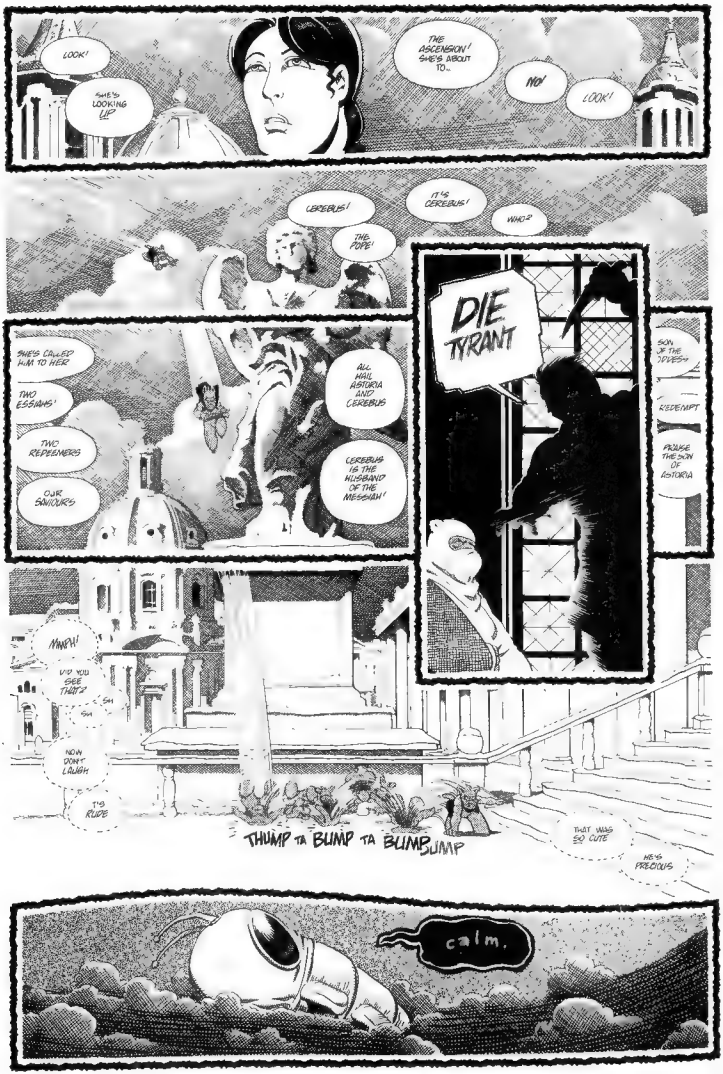

GUARDS!
GUARDS!
POIT
POIT
POIT
POIT
POIT

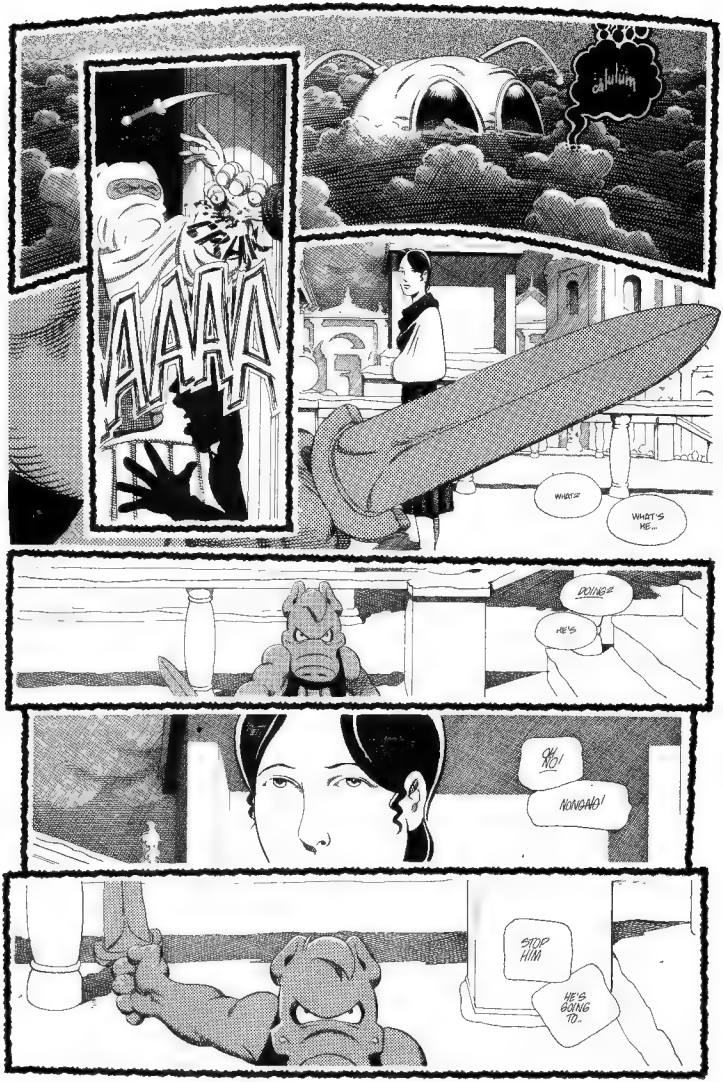

GREAT CIRIN!-- THEY'RE ALL BOWING DOWN TO HER...
A MINOR DISTRACTION
DRAW YOUR WEAPONS
WE'RE GOING TO THE ASCENSION SITE
NOW...
HURRY!..
WE'RE RUNNING OUT OF TIME!
SHE HAS COME
BLESSED ASTORIA
REDEEMER
FAVOURED DAUGHTER OF THE GODDESS
MESSIAH
FLIP
BONK!
calm


POP!
BREAK OPEN THE MOLD
THE ASCENSION IS ABOUT TO..
DIE, BLASPHEMER! ASTORIA IS THE LIVING ...
ULSK
KEEP MOVING


PEUF
POW!
HAS THE MOLD BEEN OPENED?! WE'RE... ALMOST
GREAT CIRIN! ONE SIDE OF THE SPHERE... IT IT'S COLLAPSED
THE-- THE SPHERE
IT'S...
FLAWED.
SO
SO THAT'S IT..
WE'RE BEATEN
UTTERLY...

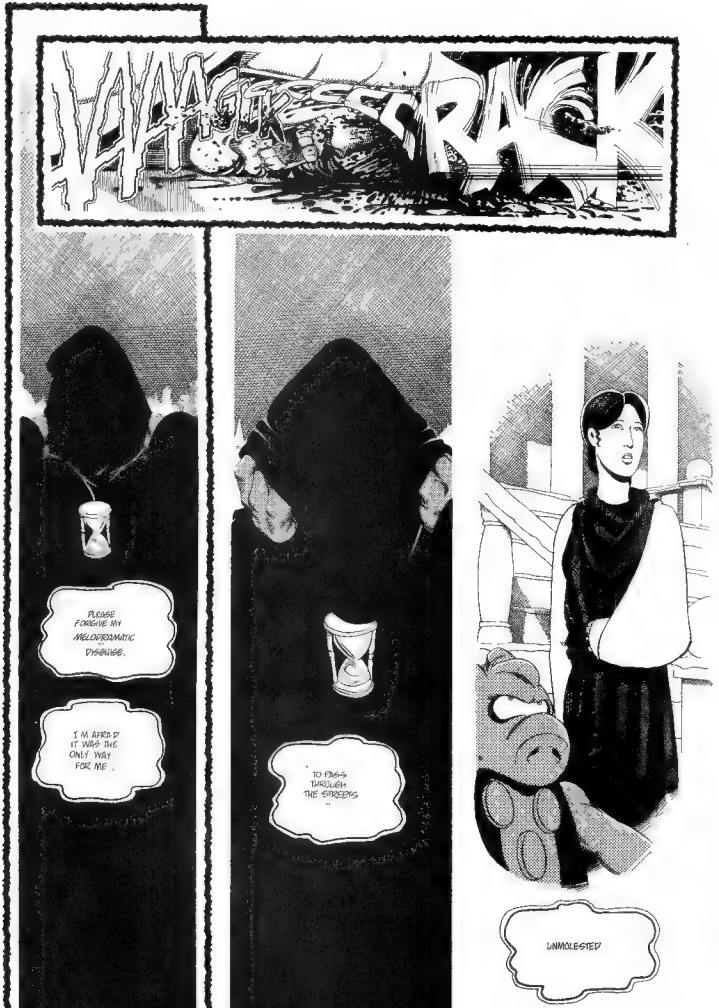

ASHOKA IS..
IS THE
NOT YET. SHE ISN'T.
THE PAPAL AUDIENCE CHAMBER IS THIS WAY.
FOLLOW ME!
calm


LOOK!
SHE'S LOOKING UP
THE ASCENSION! SHE'S ABOUT TO..
NO!
LOOK!
CEREBUS!
THE POPE!
IT'S CEREBUS!
WHO?
DIE TYRANT
SON OF THE JOVES+
REDEMPT
PROUE THE SON OF ASTORIA
SHE'S CALLED HIM TO HER
TWO ESSIANS!
TWO REDEEMERS
OUR SAVIOURS
ALL HAIL ASTORIA AND CEREBUS
CEREBUS IS THE HUSBAND OF THE MESSIAH!
MMM?!
DID YOU SEE THAT?
SH
SH
NOW DON'T LAUGH
TIS RUDE
THUMP TA BUMP TA BUMP BUMP
THAT WAS SO CUTE
HE'S PRECIOUS
calm.

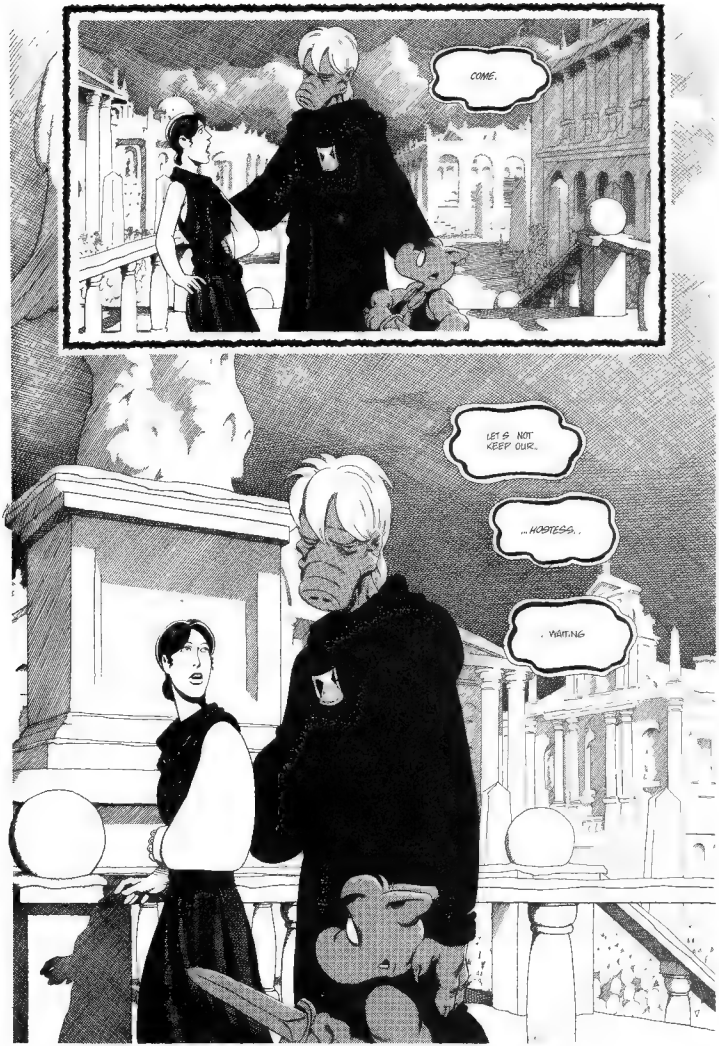

AAAA
WHAT?
WHAT'S HE...
DOING?
HE'S
OH NO!
NONGAH!
STOP HIM
HE'S GOING TO..

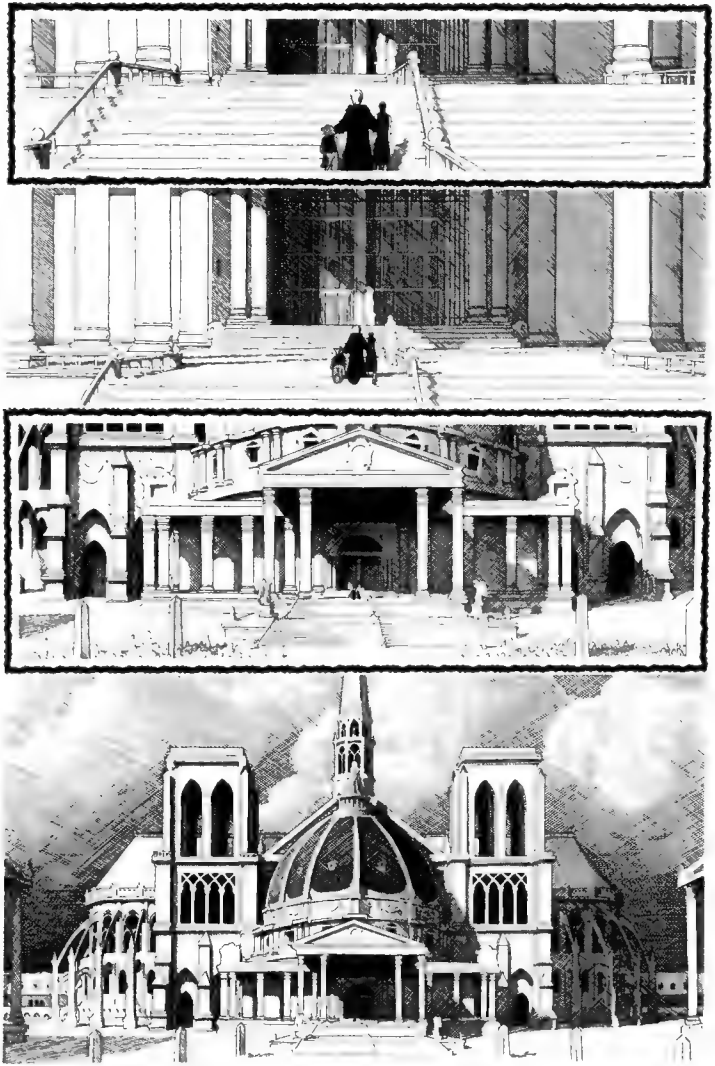
PLEASE!
STOP HIM!
CRACK
UNH!
LEBEBUS

ASTORIA
IT'S TIME
m-mercy
I-I surrender


WHACK
PLEASE FORGIVE MY MELODRAMATIC DISGUISE.
I'M AFRAID IT WAS THE ONLY WAY FOR ME.
TO PASS THROUGH THE STREETS
UNMOLESTED

GASP!
SUDENTEUS PO!
IT'S PO!
THE PO!
THREE WISHING!
ARE WE SAVED OR DOOMED?
IT'S ALL AN ILLUSION
NO NO THEY'RE ALL REAL
WE'RE SAVED!
THREE SAVIOURS?
IT...IT ISN'T POSSIBLE
BUT JUST LOOK
THEY'RE HERE
THEY'RE REALLY HERE


COME.
LET'S NOT KEEP OUR...
...HOSTESS...
...WAITING



AARDVARK COMMENT

P.O. BOX 1674, STATION 'C', KITCHENER, ONTARIO N2G 4R2

Dave,

Cerebus #170 was the most significant issue for me yet. Not for the story. The story was entertaining and intriguing as usual. It was your "Note from the President" and the transcript of your speech at Pro/Con that had the real impact on me. I've been doing a lot of thinking and self-examination over the last year and a half since I decided to put *Misspent Youths* on hiatus. I've been through a period of depression personally and artistically. I've been looking at my old patterns of living and questioning which patterns are effective for what I want to do with my life.

I want to produce comics. I've wanted to produce comics since I was old enough to understand that comics were produced by human beings rather than appearing magically at the drugstore. As a teenager I had fantasies of publishing my own magazines. This was before I understood anything about publishing. This was also before discovering drugs, sex, working for a wage, paying bills, and all those other "realities" we find ourselves faced with in the so-called real world. Over the last year I've come to rediscover the truth I knew when I was a kid. The "real world", where we pay our taxes, follow the rules, and listen to people who know more than we do, is nonsense. Of course, that "real world" exists. To deny that seems foolish to me. To accept that it is unalterable is at least as foolish. In the "real world" of adulthood I thought that I'd prefer to have somebody else deal with publishing details and I'd just produce the art. I've changed my mind. I was more focussed as a kid. Maybe smarter too. I am going to be self-publishing *Misspent Youths*.

My target for a first issue is January 1995. The series won't be titled *Misspent Youths*. I love that name but it's not representative of what the series will be about. I've yet to commit myself to another one. A number of possibilities are floating around in my head. I'll have settled on something by the end of June. I'll have to; that's when my first promo item gets printed.

Every year I've produced a calendar that I've sold for nominal profits to friends and acquaintances. This year I'm creating a more elaborate calendar to sell to a larger audience. All the profits will go toward publishing my series. It's going to be a very challenging project because it will mean I will have to actively sell the calendar. I've always had a hard time with positive self-promotion. I've gotten good at presenting myself as a weirdo and a freak; I have no problem living up to that sort of image. How could I fail at being weird? I need to become proficient at presenting myself as a talented, hard-working artist who deserves to sell a lot of copies of this calendar because I'm reinvesting the money in bigger and better projects. And I need to communicate clearly how much I appreciate someone's purchase.

I'm currently involved in producing art for a variety of different projects in the industry. All of these projects originated from other people and all of them are basically controlled by other people. They are good, talented people. I enjoy working with them. I'm learning a lot by doing these projects and I'm finally making some money doing comics. And these are not my projects and not my visions. And that's okay because I finally know what I want, and the money and experience I'm getting from these other projects will help get it for me.

I can produce a monthly comic book. I have no doubt of that. I'm still learning to discipline myself. I still get easily sidetracked some days. I still find reasons to be doing things other than art. Some of these things, like writing this letter, are very important to me. By writing this letter I am forcing myself to make a public commitment to self-publication, to controlling my creations. Too many other things I do just aren't helping me get where I want. That's one of the reasons I'm starting my series in 1995 rather than today. I'm not ready to run a marathon yet. I still need training. I need to be able to produce a completed comic book once a month, every month. By January 1995 I will be able to do that.

I want to express my appreciation for all the speeches, editorials, and encouragement that you have given over the years. You have been a voice that would not shut up. I hardly know you, but you've had a huge impact on my life. The Pinis, Richard Corben, Martin Wagner, Colleen Doran, Teri Wood, the Underground publishers, the Image guys, and many others whose names escape me at the moment have all provided me with examples of self-publishing. You have provided the voice every month for me over the last ten years since I discovered *Cerebus*. I've needed to hear that voice. On the subject of self-publication, what you have said has been invaluable to me. And because you say it every month, it has sunk in. Took long enough. I've got a thick head and good balance. The good balance has kept me mentally fence-sitting for years. I'm off the fence now.

I'm nervous as hell. I'm not a Big Name. I don't have a lot of money. I've just got talent and skill and my own commitment to my future. It's one thing to know that that is sufficient; it is another to believe it. I've made my choice. I'm going to believe it.

See you in San Diego. I'm going to have a lot of questions for you.

Peace, Love, and Blue Light Specials,

David Lee Ingersoll
P.O. Box 15082
Santa Rosa, CA
USA 95402

Well, David, it sounds like you're on the right track. I'm not sure I have much to add to what I've already said about self-publishing, since everyone self-publishes a different way. Determination is nine-tenths of the battle and it sounds like you've got that.

Howdy, y'all:

I got published! Yes, my insignificant communiqué was found worthy to grace the pages of the World-Famous Aardvark Comment!

I am, of course, referring to my previous letter to this magnificent forum, not this one. If y'all get to see this, it is due solely to the Grace of Dave. (Will ten bucks do it, Dave?)

Someone once wrote in saying that we should be concentrating on how cool a comic *Cerebus* is, in our correspondence. While I agree that that is important, it also gets repetitive after a while. (Compare the letter pages of X-um number five and X-um number two hundred eighty-five. It's really hard to tell the difference, believe me.) The first twenty pages of the book are dedicated to the comic itself and how great it is. The rest is about us, the folks that read and appreciate it. Otherwise, it would be really, really boring.

Basically, the more worthwhile a pursuit, the more worthwhile the people who care about that pursuit are. Therefore, the quality of a comic book is directly related to the quality of its letters pages.

So I'm back in California, trying desperately to find a job. Five weeks and no money. It's really starting to grate on my nerves. I hear tell that it's the worst summer in decades to be trying to find a job.

Oh, and one more thing.

Isn't it amazing how a single kiss from a beautiful woman can so fry your circuitry that you can't muster the intellectual prowess to speak coherently for almost thirty seconds? And it's at least a full minute before you can wipe the shit-eating grin off your face?

Zow.

Love and other indoor sports,

Rev. Gregory M. Flanders, om.

P.S. Yes, I am a real, honest-to God minister. But don't let that bother you. It doesn't bother me.

Now, before I could even print this letter, Rev. Flanders followed it up with:

Well, here I am again.

I'm losing her. And it is depressing me.

We were never romantically connected, if that's what you think. No, she falls under the incredibly precise category of "loved one". More than a friend, different from a lover, it's always been hard to describe what we were to each other. It's just that the knowledge of her existence, no matter how removed we were from each other in space, made my life just that much more bearable. She was the light of my life. And I'm losing her.

I come home for the summer, she's still in school, so her studies prevent us from meeting. Her job takes her out of town until I leave for school in Michigan. She has already left for that job, so that means I will not see her until winter break, in December, making it more than a year between our meetings. We will meet, but the time will interfere, making the meeting awkward. Letters will become less frequent, starting at a monthly regular, then perhaps a semi-annual surprise, and then every Christmas we'll send cards, but that won't last more than a couple of years because the reminders of what we were to each other will be uncomfortable to dredge up every year. Then I'll try to look her up one day, and I won't be able to find her. And that will be it.

The plan was that we would be together forever. I'd see her graduate, go to all her concerts (She is a world-class instrumentalist, but don't say that to her face. She won't believe you.), go to her wedding, perhaps even give the service (I have the suit still picked out. Straight black with a nice, subdued print tie.), know each other for years and years and years. And then I'd bury her. Or she'd bury me. Whichever comes first.

I guess this is just not to be.

I'll get over it eventually. But for now I sit and listen to the blues. And time passes.

And passes.

Well, that's all for now, my numerous and unseen friends.

Salaam.

Rev. Gregory M. Flanders, om.
435 22nd Street
Santa Monica, CA
USA 90402

It really is best to not get too attached to anyone in your life. They're there for a reason, I think, but the reason is seldom permanent.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

I don't normally write to comics, but a large void has been left in my life that is vaguely linked to *Cerebus*, and you seem like a pretty cool kind of guy, so I thought I'd drop you a line and see what you think.

I'm a relative newcomer to *Cerebus*, only having been introduced to it last year when my much loved and admired and very recently departed boyfriend gave me a copy of *Jaka's Story* to read — I loved it and couldn't put it down until it was finished, much to the annoyance of everyone who wanted to do other things. Since then I have read his entire collection, buying recent issues of *Mothers and Daughters* as well, and yesterday I went out and bought a signed edition of *Flight*, so I'll be completely up-to-date in about a week. I think Cerebus is so sweet — I mean I know that he is self-centered, sometimes a little thick, and not exactly the least aggressive aardvark that you'd meet, but he has a certain sadness to him that makes my heart go out to him. I hope that he and Jaka get to sort it out because they were obviously destined to be together, but knowing how life is I expect they'll just keep missing each other and end up living their lives as two misunderstood, lonely people — incomplete without the other. I know how they feel.

Colin, I know you will be reading this — you've never missed an issue. I hope you don't mind me writing to Dave; after all, he was your discovery, but a lot of good things, like *Cerebus*, that are part of my life are thanks to you. It's only been two days and I miss you like crazy; it's Friday morning. I have my final deadline for my work in 3-1/2 hours and no hope in hell of getting it done in time. The weather has changed with my mood -- the beautiful sun that has been smothering London for the past few days have been obliterated by storm clouds, the wind blowing away any trace of recent life. I'm trying to mellow my mood with Chuck Prophet; his music has a calming effect, but his songs seem so sad. It's like a bad joke; that old cliché of everything on the radio reminding me of you, it seems so true. All my life I've waited for someone like you, but it seems that we can't be together right now. I know you need time alone to sort out your life, but you know that I will always be here for

you, whatever happens. My life and circumstances may change, other people may come and go, but there will be no one who can replace you or fill the part of my soul that will always be with you. We managed to create a relationship despite all the odds being stacked against us and adversity from others, and this past year (and a bit) has been the happiest of my life, and yours also, as you have said, so I know that I couldn't have done more than I did. You just need space to realize your dreams. I still love you and hope that your dreams may include me in the future. I'll be looking out for you on a white horse to take me to Egypt. Just don't forget me, baby — I'm just where I've always been, in your heart.

Well, sorry, Dave, about that slight deviation off course just then. Thanks for listening — I'm not quite myself at the moment. The summer is lying ahead of me like a deep swamp waiting for me to slowly wade my way through it, instead of an enjoyable time full of adventure and discovery. I'll see you at the other side and let you know how it's going, because I may be a newcomer but I'm here with you now until the end. Huh, me and him, Cerebus and Jaka — it's funny how fiction often reflects life, isn't it? Colin, find your way through the darkness and come back to me when you've solved the riddles set there for you.

Cheers, Dave, you're a mate.

Loads of love and good happiness stuff for the future,

Emma Salmon
Room 1403
Halls of Residence
University of Westminster
35 Marylebone Road
London
NW1 5LS

P.S. Rush down to London this summer, a bright spot on the horizon — I'm sure all readers in Britain would make the effort to see you.

Hey, this is a switch. A letter from a heartbroken female. I guess it happens to you guys too, huh?

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Aardvark Comment,

In the interest of variety I would like to present to you my heavily edited version of the life of John Law and the Mississippi Scheme.

This story is based on a chapter from the book *Popular Delusions and the Madness of Crowds*, by Charles MacKavley, Doctor of Law, originally published in 1845 and now in the public domain.

This hard-to-find book is chock full of all sorts of useful information about people and the stupid things they do, en masse.

The story of John Law best starts with the death of King Louis XIV of France. His heir was little more than a boy, so the French Parliament appointed the foppish Duke of Orleans as Regent.

France, at this time, was in bad shape economically, with its national debt twenty times larger than its annual revenue.

Taxes were high, and the people's confidence in money was low, due to the government practice of recalling the coin money and re-issuing it at lower weight at the same face value. This didn't fool anyone.

The Duke of Orleans, Regent of France, had a gambling acquaintance, John Law, who had been travelling across Europe studying the different economies of its countries.

Law was especially interested in the use of paper money.

The son of a Scottish goldsmith, John Law inherited his father's wealth at the age of seventeen, at his father's death.

He spent most of his wealth womanising and gambling, and then had to flee Scotland after killing a man in a duel over a woman.

Law's exile on the continent allowed him to study the countries that used paper receipts for coin money. From his studies he came to believe that paper receipts could also be issued for tracts of land, and he formulated the idea of a land bank.

Years later he would pitch the idea to the Regent of France who convinced the French Parliament to authorize a bank to be opened by John Law, as an experiment. The money came from a loan from the government.

The bank issued paper receipts with the guarantee that the receipt would honor the original weight value of coin deposited, not the face value.

This made John Law's receipts very popular, and they began to trade at rates above their face value. Law was able to establish branches across the country. The towns and cities that a branch opened in saw their economies improve, partly because of their confidence in the money receipts and partly from the subtle inflation of unbacked receipts in the form of loans.

John Law's banks were stimulating the economy by loaning out money receipts for which it had no deposits. This was safe to do as long as he didn't loan out more money receipts than what he could pay for on demand in coin at any given time.

The value of the bank proven, the Regent of France convinced the Parliament to merge John Law's banks with the government banks. John Law would remain director, but he now had to answer directly to the Regent, the Duke of Orleans. The Regent ordered mass printings of paper money which were spent on government projects, mostly boondoggles.

The people accepted the paper receipts as if they were real money because of the confidence John Law had inspired in them, but after several years of over-issuing paper receipts Law realized that the bank was perilously close to being discovered without sufficient funds.

The Regent and he studied their demises and came to the conclusion that they could back the receipts with wealth taken from their North American holding, the Louisiana Territory.

To this end the Mississippi Company was formed as a subsidiary of the bank, and stock was issued: its value guaranteed by the bank.

The people, sensing a great opportunity to "get rich quick", clamored for the stock. Overnight a sidewalk stock market was created for the trade of Mississippi Company stock, and eventually stock sold for the creation of other enterprises.

This outdoor stock market became so jammed with people that many were crushed by the swells of people and violent disputes.

The stock market was officially re-created in a large public park, and included gambling tables and licentious offerings.

I would like to offer some analysis of this history, before completing it. These are my own comments and will not be found in Mr. MacKavley's work.

First, the creation of Mr. Law's bank. The promise to honor receipts based on the original value

of coin deposited made the receipts popular. But to account for an improving economy we must look at the inflationary loans.

These loans convinced people that the economic situation was improving; it improved morale. "Production" improved, as did "consumer confidence".

But the real economic problem was that the government owed huge amounts of money to private citizens and banks (national debt), and to pay just the interest on the debt the government had to raise revenues (much higher taxes).

On the one hand there was a group of people who could not spend money because the government could not pay them back, and on the other there was a group of people hoarding their money and valuables, afraid that the government or economic disaster would rob them.

The first group benefitted from Law's bank by borrowing money they should have had anyway, while the second group, noting the first group was again spending money (employment and industry), began to relax their hoarding measures.

And so the inflationary money (unbacked receipts) stepped in for the frozen assets as if it were the real money, hoarded out of sight.

Second, the massive inflationary printing of the French government after it had incorporated Law's bank.

Gold and silver have real, intrinsic value, and as long as the people believed (consumer confidence) that the receipts were legitimate, it was as if real money (coin) had been created.

The government spent the money on various projects and public works, and so money (unbacked receipts) became available again. The naive people were safe and happy in their paper wealth.

Third, the people wanted more. Believing that a new Renaissance was in effect, they became greedy, and so when the Mississippi Company was formed, they focussed their false wealth on it.

This was partially a good thing, because it sucked out much of the worthless receipts from the economy and replaced them with stocks payable in the far future, by default a popular government bond issue.

And so the banks were temporarily saved from default.

Fourth, a form of money roulette was now in existence; although no one realized it at first, as time went on a few would figure it out. Basically, those who would cash in their paper receipts for real money (coin), before the banks ran out, would be the only people with real money.

Unlike modern times, no one, not even the rich, was aware of this, and so the pyramid continued to grow.

Fifth, and most insidious, even normally cautious families pawned their valuables, their life savings, to take part in the new stock market.

They traded family heirlooms and their silver plates for worthless money to invest in a ridiculous stock market.

And so I return to the story, which, by the way, spans more than two decades of history.

The stock issue for the Mississippi Company was so popular that over the years there were new issues printed, sold by the company to private citizens who then traded them on the market.

A new class of citizen was created: the stock jobbers (traders), who became rich from their "trade" fees.

As these years passed, newspaper stories reported how fleets of ships carrying thousands of workers had gone to Mississippi.

The stories then turned to how great amounts of wealth had been discovered and were being amassed to be sent back to France.

None of these stories were true. No ships had ever sailed, nor workers laboured, and no wealth was accumulated. But these stories did succeed in keeping demand high for the stock, which in turn deflated the inflated money supply.

Meanwhile, those very few who had recognized the situation for the con game that it was, began to slowly and quietly convert their paper into real wealth, which they equally quietly sent abroad to other countries, thus depleting France of its real wealth.

After a boom comes the bust, when the boom is based on deceit.

The banks ran out of enough money (coin) to honor receipts. Drastic dictatorial measures were taken to prevent runs at the banks, which were eventually forced to pay out cash in huge bags of copper coins.

The Mississippi Company was then exposed for its fraud, and many wealthy and honorable families were bankrupted along with the majority of the population.

The amazing thing is that the two principal creators of this disaster did not do these things for their personal gain.

John Law had believed in his system, and it would have indeed worked well had not the Duke of Orleans become greedy in its use.

John Law had saved none of his wealth, preferring to re-invest it in various French companies. He died penniless more than a decade later in Venice.

The Regent, Duke of Orleans, had not ever fully understood the principles of John Law's theories. He had simply seen wealth created magically and insisted that John Law continue to make this magic, thereby bringing his country to ruin.

It should be noted that the founders of the United States were well aware of the example of France and paper money, as well as a similar disaster in England that occurred at roughly the same time.

There was a great debate between those in favor of centralized banking and paper money (the Hamilton camp) and those vehemently against (the Jefferson camp).

The Jefferson camp prevailed, and provisions against paper money and centralized banking were installed in the U.S. Constitution. Look it up. Why these provisions are ignored today is another very long story.

Finally, a word to the wise: the story of John Law and the Mississippi Scheme illustrates how people can make abstract things exist, but to believe that today's monetary con game is the same is a big mistake.

John Law created his con game by accident, but there have been and continue to be those people who have learned from it.

Today's monetary con game is a descendant of John Law's, but though it appears the same, the rules and objects are completely different. I still have much to learn, and so do you, even more . . .

. . . but you won't find these answers in college.

Awaiting your comments,

Sincerely,

Anthony Donovan
34-19 41st
Astoria, NY
USA 11101

A lot of people misunderstood my comments about actually creating all of the money that gets invented in the course of the day-to-day life of a given country. This little history (and thank you for sharing it with us, Anthony) is just one of innumerable examples in history of money being invented that doesn't exist. I think it's time to get serious about it and realize that this is what we (as a civilisation) do and get out ahead of the problem. Nine hundred and ninety nine quintillion dollars, or whatever it takes. Of *course* political leaders will use most of it to line their pockets; as an inevitability, it has to be factored into the equation. Five hundred quintillion dollars for graft and four hundred and ninety-nine quintillion to actually solve some problems. Whatever it takes.

★★★★★★★★★★

Hello, Dave,

I am writing to comment on your reply to Harry Payne's letter in 169.

Harry wrote largely about comics being seized by Customs, and one MP's attempt to tighten the Obscene Publications Act.

In your reply (read by how many thousand people?) you blamed the Feminist/Matriarchist agenda. I nearly exploded. What is implied by your comments (whether intended or not) is that it is *WOMEN* to blame. The Feminists and Matriarchists.

Details such as the Obscene Publications Act having been introduced and enforced almost completely by men (politicians, judges, police, and lawyers — all areas where women are vastly in the minority, and even less represented in more advanced positions) don't seem to stop censorship originating from the evil people trying to forward and represent women.

Sorry, Dave, but I don't buy it.

Somehow I doubt David Britton, publisher and bookseller imprisoned for a month in 1982 due to the Act and who repeatedly had large portions of his stock confiscated and 'destroyed', blames Feminists/Matriarchists. (I'm drawing this information from "Who'll Be Next?" an essay in Michael Moorcock's *The Opium General and Other Stories.* Other points here are drawn from his more recent fiction and non-fiction collection, *Casablanca.)*

That the chief of the police force which repeatedly visited Britton's premises was anything but a Feminist/Matriarchist is no secret. Chief Constable Anderton (now retired) once said on television, in connection with the case of a serial-killer, that if women didn't want to be murdered, they shouldn't be walking the streets.

Censorship in Britain, and oppression in general, is not the fault of women or feminists. Often censorship ostensibly against 'obscene' works is due more to a political intolerance, to the extent where alternative or feminist bookshops are more likely to fall foul of the Act than a major chain stocking any amount of 'pornographic' texts.

I'm hesitant about writing about pornography in more general terms, but as this appears to be a freedom of speech issue, I want to ask one simple question. If *Playboy* was the voice of free speech it claimed to be, why were submissions rewritten to follow editorial policy as standard? (See *Casablanca,* p. 107 in my copy.)

I could try to write more, and do indeed wish to. But my ignorance of so many points holds me back. But my essential point is this — feminists are NOT the enemy. A medium which claims to protect freedom of speech, yet which spends millions misrepresenting and editing the words of feminists and radicals, is rather protecting its own interests. The popular media are not the place to learn about feminism. Whether you agree with them or not, feminists are.

The extent to which newspapers twist stories, and the power of TV to present a restricted viewpoint, stagger me on occasion, and we all suffer from this continual and very real form of censorship.

I can only recommend the two Moorcock books I have referred to. I intend to read Andrea Dworkin's book *Pornography* soon, but will reserve judgement on that until I do so.

Finally, as Moorcock reminded me, in the oppressive state of Orwell's *1984,* while free speech and thought were limited probably more than any other real or imaginary place, pornography was produced and distributed by the government.

And so, until the day when we are each able to exercise our own responsibility without dread authority, I am yours,

Sincerely,

Daniel Livingstone
158 Kenmure St.,
Pollokshields,
Glasgow
Scotland

Having searched the text of your letter for anything resembling a coherent point (as opposed to misguided male-feminist rhetoric) and having come up empty, I find I have nothing to say.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

I write to wish you success on your current tour. The "Tidy-Bowl Man" may have been heavily critical of your motivations, but I think that this venture makes perfect sense. You have been working steadily to create a quality piece of art, and you have every right to do what you can to promote it. Why wouldn't you want more people to read it? To be sure, there is a point of diminishing marginal utility (Hey, if Nick Eden put concepts from his Astronomy class in his letter — "event horizon", #168 – then I can use concepts from my Economics class), where the cost of promotion, both in terms of plane fare and personal fatigue, outweighs the benefits of getting one more reader. Yet this does not make the whole concept of advertising and endorsement illegitimate.

It seems that there is a whole school of thought devoted to the idea that an artist must always labour in obscurity or else compromise his integrity. I've heard this axiom applied to musicians, writers, directors, and comic-book creators. And I don't think it's true in any of these cases. *Some* people have compromised quality in order to sell more quantity, but this is not a hard and fast rule.

Similar thinking has created another theorem which I believe to be equally false. Namely, that you can't enjoy reading comics and at the same time make a profit by collecting them. I used to be prejudiced against collectors in this way. A lot of my opinion was shaped by my former girlfriend (the one who introduced me to *Cerebus).* She went so far as to secretly deface countless issues of *Spider-Man* #1 in the comic shop

she was employed in by smudging her fingerprints on the interior pages.

Lately, though, I've begun rethinking my views. If I can, for example, sell an early issue of *Sandman* for ten times more than what I paid for it, and with that money buy a reprint compilation including that issue and still have some extra money to buy new comics, what's wrong with that? Everybody profits from this. I get to save some money and buy some new comics. The comic shop gets more business than it would have. The comic-book companies get more money than they would have.

Alternatively, I could categorically refuse to take part in the wicked speculative market of comic-book collectors and continue to spend my leftover change on the few comics that it affords. Then I could whine bitterly about how I can never fill in issues I missed because back-issues are so expensive. I'd rather not.

So, in closing, I say fear not, Dave. Though Mr. "Tidy-Bowl Man" may never understand Campaign '93, just as my ex-girlfriend may never see that mylar and backing boards do have a place in this world, it doesn't really matter in the long run, because we will be profiting from it, not them.

Sincerely,

Scott Harrison
General Delivery
Mt. Hermon, CA
USA 95041

P.S. Take that "handful of coins" and buy yourself a beer

P.P.S. The "Tidy-Bowl Man"? What an unfortunate appellation

Well, I'm glad you're honest about it. We have our own currency in the comic book field (*many* currencies, really). When I met a couple on the '92 Tour who had rented an apartment from another Cerebus fan and had used their copy of *Cerebus* number one for their first month's rent (a comic book that cost about fifteen cents to print in 1977), I have trouble feeling bad about it.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

I am sitting here now on my $250,000 computer to tell you that you (with a little help from Ger, etc.) have changed my life. I mean, totally changed my world views

I am, at the moment, one of the few people in the United States with over 4 million dollars in the bank, and climbing every moment, because of a large multi million-dollar firm that I don't even know what it does.

However, I will not remain of this status for long, because I have decided, henceforth, that I am Communist.

It was you, ultimately, that helped me make this decision. It all started when an old friend of mine burst into my boardroom and handed me a piece of Marxist literature. Of course, I didn't read it right away. No, first I called the police, got him out of there, and finished my board meeting. Later, however, reading the book gave me an overall feeling that I should immediately pack up and leave for Vietnam.

Of course, then I faced the problem of leaving all my money behind, and that all but clinched it until a few weeks ago.

I was at my local specialty shop, buying my usual ten issues of *Cerebus*. I have only been collecting for a few years, and almost immediately after I started I decided I wanted to have the entire story. Now, most people, faced with this problem, buy a couple of phone books, and put it to rest. Not me. I made it a personal goal to collect all the comics individually. No reprints. For someone of my money and power, this is a fairly simple task. However, this time, having just read the book, it made me think. What about all those people who can't afford to get ten limited-edition *Cerebus* comics a week? Then it occurred to me, if I were to pack my bags for Russia right now and leave all my money in a trust fund, then I wouldn't be half as confused as I am now.

The reason I am telling you this is because by the time the fund is payable to somebody, I'll probably be dead, which is why I am leaving all that money to you, which, by that time, will be more than enough to keep the entire comics industry well-set for years. I am keeping you in trust that you will invest the money in your company (isn't that what a trust fund is all about?) and not keep it for yourself.

Sincerely,

Don Lagism
305 W. 98th St.
#7C S New York, NY
USA 10025

P.S. Live long and prosper, because the money won't be valid until the year 2093.

January 1st, 2094, everybody. Party's at my place.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear *Cerebus* Creators:

The best thing I ever did while working part-time at *Showcase Comics* (Granite Run Mall, Media, PA and Bryn Mawr, PA) was pick up a copy of *Cerebus*. I love the story!! It started when I picked up *Cerebus — Jaka's Story*, and I now am reading *Mothers and Daughters*.

I have always thought of Cerebus as "cute" and "cuddly", but not as much as now, since I saw a small furry Cerebus doll on the back of *Cerebus: Mothers & Daughters* #19. It was a display of Silver & Golden Ages of Canadian Comic Books at the Brant County Museum, Brantford, Ontario. On the bottom of the showcase there is a small grey "cute" and "furry" Cerebus in a vest, and I would like to know if you know where I may be able to purchase such an item. I have enclosed a copy of the picture for your reference.

Showcase Comics has a large number of subscribers to *Cerebus*, and I pointed the doll out to one of the subscribers, who also showed an interest. I am also sure that *Showcase Comics* would be interested in carrying some of the dolls for resale. My manager's name is Michael Buce.

I am enclosing a business card from *Showcase Comics* for your reference. Keep up the great story line!! It seems a very long time from issue to issue, but it is worth the wait.

Lee Stevenson
4029 La France Road
Lafayette Hill, PA
USA 19444

At the risk of sounding like a broken record; all of the Cerebus toys were hand-made at various points through the early nineteen-eighties by individuals who had no idea what they were letting themselves in for. Each was driven mad by a tidal wave of orders which would have condemned them to producing one (1) stuffed Cerebus doll a day for the rest of their lives. There is a great demand for them, but until some mass-producer or other comes forward and offers me a deal which no mass-producer in his or her right mind would consider even for a

minute, the current supply in private hands is all that exists. Thanks for your interest, though (and hi, to everyone at *Showcase Comics).*

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

Great idea: *Cerebus* #301: "The return of Cerebus!"

Carefully explaining how he really didn't die, after all.

No?!??? Come on, you'd make a mint. After all, money comes first, right? Right? Right?

Love,

Eolake Stobblehouse
Arkonagade 21, 1.th.
1726 Copenhagen V.
Denmark

Wow. I never thought of that before. You're a genius.

★★★★★★★★★★

Hey, Dave,

Thank you for the autograph, man. It has brought me great joy. On the day of June 15, 1993, I walk into *Comic Books 101*, and Bill, the owner, says, "Hey! I got something for you at the Diamond convention in Atlanta last week." He goes into the back and brings out a little autographed card with *Cerebuspawn* on it with your room number on it (1135) and a Previews with the little note, "To Brian — Thanks for promoting my book, man — Dave Sim." How keen! Oh, Yeah! Before I forget, that's a really neat little skunk stamp on the Campaign '93 package. I must say, out of the three major comics that I collect each month *(Cerebus, Sandman,* and *Spawn), Cerebus* tops them all. I am getting so goddamn tired of Image saying they're trying to change the face of comics. What the hell is the new face of comics? Not getting your books out on time? No offense to Todd or Sam Kieth. Well, anyway, thanks for being a friend and a constant.

Take care, and 'til 300,

Brian Barr
Rd. #2, Box 210
Clarion, PA
USA 16214

P.S.: How about something after 300? You could reprint all 6,000 pages into one big volume. That would be an impressive thing to have on my bookshelf.

All six thousand pages in one big volume? Talk about your insoluble binding problem. How about a *Complete Cerebus Suitcase* with nifty compartments for all the trade paperbacks and a concealed grenade launcher?

★★★★★★★★★★

Uh, oh, I'm back . . .

I just finished *Cerebus* 171, and it was a blast. If I'm not mistaken (and all who know me know the chances, right?), you are laying some serious groundwork for the subject of family in the story, with the Elf representing his descendants, the elder Aardvark his biological parents, and the mysterious "mum" as his foster parents. This could put a major spin on things, especially if Astoria is pregnant with Cerebus' child, and the papacy is an inheritable position. At the trial, the point was made that Astoria was the Pontiff of the Western Church, while Cerebus was the Eastern Pontiff. A child could perhaps lay legitimate claim to both churches. Hmm.

Of course, this presumes, among other things, that she actually is pregnant and is willing to acknowledge Cerebus as the father. Or would she let Jaka adopt the child as her own, secretly, just to aggravate Cirin?

By the way, in case Margaret or anyone else cares, I'm the person who had the Character theme idea. Back in *Cerebus* 151, my letter is the one right after Connie Lingus, so it might have been missed . . . Anyway, it's nice to be noticed, as vanity must be ever sated.

I echo David Groenewegwn's comment about "the nice lady" taking orders for you. She was very nice, and patient. Give her a cookie, too. Yes, I also am the one who rambled about Cookies, Mondays, and Gerhard . . .

I also have a plea for help. I am the only person at the local comic-book store who is getting *Cerebus* right now, and somehow, the distribution has been, shall we say, spotty. I am missing 158, 166, 167, and 169. If you, or anyone could direct me; I've been as far away as Orlando and cannot get back-issues I'll listen to any reasonable offer. Thank you.

There is something that has been gnawing at me, though, and that's your blanket condemnation of the work-for-hire idea. You seem to be forgetting that without *Daredevil,* Frank Miller wouldn't have done *Ronin* or *Give Me Liberty.* The monthly *Batman* comic gave rise to *The Dark Knight Returns.* Neil Gaiman did not *create Sandman,* though I'll grant you, he is re-creating it in a new image. Todd McFarlane would not have nearly the commercial success with *Spawn* if he had not done *Spider-Man* for Marvel.

The trouble is, the days of apprenticeship are long over. Either you have the money to go to a special school, or you send in scripts or art samples to everyone publishing comics. Remember, before *Elfquest,* Wendy Pini couldn't land a steady art job at Marvel or DC. The Pinis got into self-publishing mostly because nobody else wanted the book. Now, people acknowledge her talent, even to the point where she illustrated a segment of *Superman* 400.

Work-for-hire is a valuable tool for a beginner. You have a framework to start with and a guideline for the stories and characters. Unless you're one of a very few, this is necessary to hone your talent without risking your life savings. In my case, for example, I have an idea or two that I've been refining, but I don't have the income to risk my house, etc., for something I'm not sure is workable. So, I do work for others. Mostly, I work my regular job, which requires lots of overtime at the oddest moments. That means I have to get my thoughts on paper, fast and accurately the first time. In my case, it was relatively easy, as I was working on *Hero Alliance* at Innovation, where then Editor David Campitti was one of the co-creators of the book. I was playing in his world and by his rules. If I didn't like it, I was under no obligation to play. I liked it. In the process, Dave taught me a great deal about scripting and pacing, which might have taken me months or years on my own. I also had fun and got paid. No, it wasn't a lot, but it was appropriate for someone starting out. I got a raise on my next story, so it wasn't a bad thing.

You see, there are many people out there who have lots of ideas about Batman and Superman, and the X-Men. I do, too. The truth is that many of these people, maybe 99%, will never break through professionally. I was lucky, and I'm not there yet, by a long shot. My eventual goal is to have a creator-controlled work published, but in the meantime, I must lay the groundwork to make my work

good enough to interest someone besides myself. To have it your way, only those crazy enough, at 18 or 19, to go out on a financial and creative limb will publish anything. That is not good enough. There is a need for people to hone their talents and expose their work to the public and a known source. Like it or not, the "Big Two" are ideally suited, as are the other alternative publishers.

The thrust of your argument is, as I see it, that the writers and artists must have the right to choose how to work. I agree completely. BUT that also means we have the right to go to hell in our own handbasket. I deplore what was done to Siegel and Shuster as much as anyone, but does that mean we must vilify Wayne Boring, Julius Schwartz, Curt Swan, Wendy Pini, Frank Miller, Will Eisner, and all the others who ever did any work on *Superman*? I think not. I believe that when you work on something you did not create, there is an obligation to the creator to do as well as you can. I realize that Chris Claremont was "ripped off", but did that send him off to do his own work? No. He's doing *Aliens vs. Predator*. His only creator-controlled work was *First Flight*, and *Grounded*, a prose series. Is he greedy or stupid, or is he trying to pay the rent? You make valid arguments against work-for-hire, but your way throws everything out. We can't accept that, because then nobody will care about the creations that made the comic-book industry what it is today.

So how about this — you nose around for a viable comic-book idea. It can be a graphic novel, a mini-series, a one-shot, or an on-going series. Then you loan them corporate space. They get to use the Aardvark-Vanaheim name, ship their stuff with yours to the printer, and join on your distribution list in return for money, period. You do this until the new book is off the ground, at which point either they choose to continue as part of your company or become their own company. You would exercise no editorial control whatsoever. All they have to do is whatever they promise. You were doing it with the Unique Stories for a while, but it doesn't go far enough. If these people have a good idea, but need polish, you offer polish, which they are free to accept or decline. Yes, it would be a heavy investment of time and money, but this is, so far as I can figure, the only viable alternative to work-for-hire.

Believe me, I'm not trying to aggravate you, but while I agree completely that work-for-hire leaves you with the short end of the financial stick, it beats the hell out of letting script and art samples pile up because you have nowhere to publish them. I didn't write you this to be a pain, but to practice what I preach. Harry Chapin said, "Do something", and my agreement or disagreement is worthless unless I try to help remedy the situation. For my own part, I'm going to see if I can't convince someone to try creator-controlled work as an experiment, with my work as the sacrificial lamb. Who knows, maybe by this time next year, I'll be doing my own letter column.

I know that, between the book, the tour, and Campaign '93, you're busy, but I would really like to know what you think of this. Incidentally, on a local level, *Cosmic Connection* in Ocala, Florida now has my first printing copy of the *Cerebus* phone book to encourage new readers. Don't mind, though, since my wife's first-printing copy is still in the bookshelf, beside my signed copies of *Elfquest*

While I'm rambling, when will the next phone book be offered, and how much, etc.? I need to budget these things well in advance. Thanks for the time and effort you've put into *Cerebus*, in all its myriad forms. It shows.

Until whenever,

Michael Buckley
411 N.E. 40th Terrace
Ocala, FL
USA 34470

***Women* will be solicited in the spring of 1994.**

The last thing creative people need is a crutch as I learned in my experiments with publishing others. Most of them actively seek out crutches instead of working on building muscle tone. 'Do something' isn't enough, I'm afraid. My motto is 'Do something constructive'. Turning Aardvark Vanaheim into a new haven for creators who want to make *their* career *my* responsibility would be destructive, both of me and them. I always liked Scott McCloud's image of Tundra (in the Kevin Eastman era) as the helicopter lifing off from the roof of the American embassy in Saigon. All of these artists and their portfolios hanging off of it. Ten million dollars (or whatever Kevin spent) is no replacement for creators who decide to grow some balls and a backbone and take control of their own careers.

DAVE SIM PERSONAL APPEARANCES

1993

OCTOBER 2, 3
DEARBORN, MICHIGAN
Motor City Con.

NOVEMBER 26
COLUMBUS, OHIO
Central City Comics

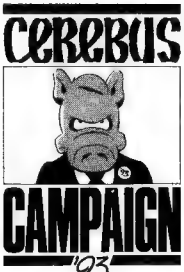
NOVEMBER 27, 28
COLUMBUS, OHIO
Mid-Ohio Con.

1994
with
GERHARD

OZCON III

JANUARY 15, 16
SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO
Gran Salon
Convention Center

FEBRUARY 18–20
SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA
Park Lane Hotel
161 Elizabeth Street



'Add France to the list of countries that have gotten in touch'

Dear Dave:

Greetings from the Junior Ferret Patrol Compound of Electronic Agtprop and (Alleged) Tax Evasion. We're making progress on the Animated Cerebus movies and I've received a bunch of potential volunteers to help distribute what we come up with on a bunch of networks outside the Internet.

I've also received a couple of cold calls regarding the Campaign. Add France to the list o' countries that have gotten in touch electronically. Also, a young (seventh grade—"Sonny, when I was in seventh grade there weren't no *Cerebus*. And the comic shop was 17 miles away up hill into the wind both ways on foot in a blizzard all year 'round. Dammit.") fellow named Oliver Lyons contacted me about helping out. As soon as I have something solid to give Oliver and others, we'll start the advertising part of this operation.

Mike Lamps has also created a black and white version of the Free Cerebus that he has spread around the BBS's in the Rockford area. When I get a chance I will add the "advertising supplement" I sent you by fax about a week ago to his stuff and get it out there for the rest of the world. It runs on IBM's without any additional software, is in black & white, and looks pretty good. If folks can't find it at any of the ftp sites listed elsewhere [I don't know which issue that fax will appear in—please insert the right information here] they can contact Mike (3188 City View Drive, Rockford, IL 61101-9520) and maybe work something out. Thanks for chewing up more of my alleged free time, Mike.

Finally, I forgot to mention that when Glenn has finished the Animated Cerebus he will be selling them at cost by mail. I've enclosed a prototype disk (doesn't do anything, just looks cool) so you can see what they'll look like. Folks who can't get it via ftp and/or want to buy their own disk copies can contact Glenn at:

Glenn Carnagey
Center for Population Economics
1101 E. 58th St.
Chicago, IL 60637-1511

That's it for now.

Best,

Jim Ottaviani of Operation Crazed Ferret
605 W. Hoover, #5
Ann Arbor, MI
USA 48103-5474

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

An update on "Cerebus Month" as we discussed at the Diamond seminar last month.

To refresh your memory, my plan to kick off Campaign '93 at Time Tunnel was to give away *Cerebus* #0 to any customer who purchased $20 or more. After a bit of thought, I lowered that minimum to $10 to get more customers involved (although you'd be surprised at how many kids have $20 or more).

As an added incentive to giving away *Cerebus* #0, you, along with Jeff Smith and James Owen, were kind enough to sign 5 prints at the seminar. I inserted coupons into 5 random copies of #0 and made a sign announcing the impromptu contest.

Well, phase one has turned out to be a success. As you probably know, people LOVE free stuff, and they *especially* love it when there's some kind of premium involved. Everyone seemed genuinely excited to get a copy, and the five who won were doubly excited. Now if they get hooked . . .

Phase two of my involvement in Campaign '93 entails getting the phone books back in stock, which leads into phase three, giving away *Cerebus* #175 (*Mothers & Daughters* Book Three, Part One) when it comes in.

As an aside, both *Bone* and *A Distant Soil* have picked up new readers here at Time Tunnel, while most of those same people want to know where (and what) *Hepcats* is.

Anyhow, just thought I'd give you an update on the events in Western Pennsylvania. Hope all is well with you and Gerhard. More updates to follow.

Sincerely,

Patrick Donley

(P.S. If my store isn't on your retailer list already, please include it now. Thanks!)

Time Tunnel
1001 Castle Shannon Blvd.
Castle Shannon, PA
USA 15234

★★★★★★★★★★

PROPOSAL FOR 'COMMENT'

"IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE THIS WAY"

For well over a year *Comics International, The Comics Journal,* and *The Comic Buyers Guide* have all been saturated — and not without reason — with fearful predictions, indignant complaints and jaded weariness concerning the Superhero Explosion, speculator mania, over-priced covers, multi-crossovers, late publications, falling standards, store closures, and bad media publicity. Look at that list again. See a pattern?

In the following paragraphs I hope to touch on much of this debate, but negativity breeds negativity. Instead I'm offering a fresh perspective, addressed to readers, retailers and publishers, based on the forthcoming UK TOUR by *Cerebus's* creators, Dave Sim and Gerhard. If you don't currently read *Cerebus,* don't switch off, because if even half the plans we have lined up for this autumn bear fruit, this whole campaign is going to usher in several industry firsts, showing how creators and retailers can cooperate, how retailers can cooperate with each other, and how the profile of comics can be raised and expanded positively and productively in the minds of the public, to the benefit of all.

CEREBUS UK TOUR '93

This September Dave Sim and Gerhard are going to be embarking on a whirlwind tour of the UK, a punishing fortnight's schedule taking them all the way from Salisbury to Aberdeen via London and The Midlands. This tour is being coordinating by Mark Simpson and myself here at *Fantastic Store Nottingham,* basically because we volunteered.

Like many of yourselves we too were growing wary and weary of the way this industry seemed to be regressing — we were growing tired of gimmicks, price-hikes, crossovers and the narrow, often harmful publicity going out to an already disinformed public through over-exaggerated four-colour deaths and the rise of the amateur speculator. Unlike others, however, we were sick of being tired of it, and decided to do something about it.

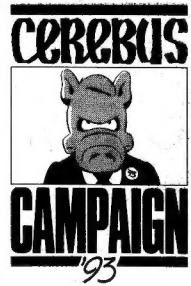
When Dave Sim announced his first trip to the UK in 7 years, we were determined to use this opportunity, not just to promote one of the sharpest comics this medium has ever witnessed, but the true diversity that this unique and eclectic artform has to offer. For just as there are films, music and books for everyone, so there are comics for everyone. This is why, alongside our superhero titles you'll find everything from *Hate* to *Hellblazer, Bone* to *Naughty Bits,* and *Exit* and *Cerebus* and *Samurai Jam,* not stocked in ones and twos, but in their fifties and hundred, selling just as well as their mainstream partners. By welcoming in as many individual customers as possible we maximize our potential sales, and improve the conditions for such publications, encouraging further diversity, which in turn brings in an even wider customer base. It's not a vicious circle, it's a positive cycle.

But it is only by persuading a much larger public that we have something to offer them, that this medium will really gain the opportunity it deserves to expand. *Cerebus* seemed to us to be the ideal place to start, because its sales were already rising, its entire run remains in print, its scope and appeal are vast, its letter column — infested by the most diverse and downright peculiar people on this planet, as obsessed with music as they are with the comic — shrieked of an untapped potential, and Dave Sim himself is one of the most positive campaigning creators around.

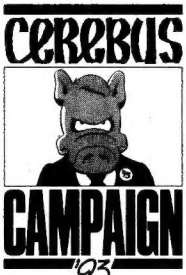
We began to send feelers out to other stores with an equally strong reputation for Independents, and the response was so overwhelmingly positive that what began as a one-off signing and an appearance at UKCAC quickly snowballed into one of the largest and widest independent tours this country has ever seen. Dave himself had come up with an imaginative campaign to pick up on the momentum of his US Tour's success, and these we incorporated and expanded into a whole strategy to fuel the fire in advance of the signings. So what can you look forward to?

Already we've seen the release of *Cerebus Number Zero,* which is both a companion to the reprint volumes but also a perfect introduction to newcomers, which Dave has published at a loss, and which most tour stores have promoted similarly with one incentive or another; we've established a national distribution system whereby all the reprint books remain *constantly* in stock in all tour stores, sold to us at such excellent terms that we can offer great discounts; each store is printing up t-shirts without licensing charge, thereby undercutting most imports by some £4 a shot; similarly with posters, stickers, badges etc. All of which means *Cerebus* is on the shelves, on the streets, and giving readers the best value for money possible. At the same time it's earning retailers funds for phase two.

For the first time ever retailers and a creator are co-sponsoring a series of advertisements to put those shops and one comic into the public eye — in the best possible market — the music press. Such cooperation, and such cross-pollination is long overdue. The idea was Mark's, taken from *The Chain With No Name* a loose cartel of independent record stores who advertise L.P.s, with premiums such as ltd.



'It doesn't have to be this way'



'. . . in the last two weeks *Cerebus Zero* has sold four hundred copies'

edition 7"s available only at those stores. We too will have something to give away, only we're not giving it away yet. You'll have to watch out for the adverts. And that's just the beginning of our media assault. I suggest you hang on to your newspapers, and keep your eyes to the screen, because this is going to be one hell of an Autumn.

Already, the signs are good. In the first two and a half DAYS of release, in our store alone, *Cerebus Zero* sold TWO HUNDRED copies; in these last two WEEKS it has sold FOUR HUNDRED copies. It took five covers of *X-Men* #1, two months to sell 350. That really is a record worth thinking about. And we've only just begun. Nor was it a fluke. You should see the sales of the reprint volumes. *Cerebus* is now one of our top five sellers, every single month, yes, because we have campaigned to get it onto the shelves and read, but once tried, you'd be surprised.

There's an element to this of giving the game away — what's to stop other creators and stores copying us? Nothing. Just as I hope every store in the country has benefitted by our campaign advertising *Cerebus* in these pages, so I hope others take a good look at the possibilities of such cooperation in the future. We don't have to sit back and watch our industry become smothered in junk bonds, watch our customers bleed themselves penniless on overpriced hype, see our market stagnate, our expectations grind to a halt.

It takes three groups of people with five qualities to sort the whole thing out. From the publisher it takes positive thinking, imagination, cooperation and commitment; from the retailer also it takes positive thinking, imagination, cooperation and commitment; and from the customer all it takes is an open mind.

To all those readers out there who are currently feeling burnt and bored, yet who cling to the idea that all they could possibly enjoy are superheroes, please, *think!* Do you only listen to one type of music? Do you only watch one sort of television programme? I too enjoy Peter David on *The Hulk*, but there's a whole wealth of stuff out there you will thank yourself for discovering. If your local retailer is a good retailer he'll be happy to talk to you and, based on what you currently enjoy, recommend something a little different, a breath of fresh air.

To retailers and publishers, then: It doesn't have to be this way.

To everyone who's helped out on this: Thank you for proving it.

To readers: Ask for more.

Stephen L. Holland
Fantastic Store,
Nottingham

By the time you read this, Campaign '93 could probably be renamed Lame Duck '93 with only three months left in the year. I'd certainly like to thank all of the stores, fans and just plain folks who participated. The net effect of Tour '92 and Campaign '93 has been a substantial increase in sales on the monthly book (we bottomed out around 14,700 on the last few issues of the *Melmoth* story-line; current circulation for issue 173 was 20,700). The largest circulation for any *Cerebus* title was achieved with *Cerebus Number Zero* which shipped 45,000 copies a couple of months back (and which will be kept in print once the ten thousand copy over-printing has been depleted). Our largest increase was on the reprint volumes (which makes sense; if you're getting new readers, they aren't going to start with issue 170) which we have been busily reprinting in larger and larger quantities more and more often just to keep ahead of the demand. Sales of the reprint volumes now represent a whopping 80% of Aardvark Vanaheim's revenues. According to the latest 'pie charts' in Diamond Dialogue, Aardvark-Vanaheim has the fourth largest market share of any publisher on the Diamond Star System (just behind Marvel, DC and Dark Horse).

In the remaining three months of this section, we'll be moving from Campaign '93 into our plans for 1994 and 1995 which I have spent the last seventy-two hours babbling into the phone to Martin (Hepcats) Wagner, Larry (Beanworld) Marder and Jeff (Bone) Smith. Martin: 'Count me in' Larry: 'Let's do it.' Jeff: 'Sounds good to me.'

Beans, Bones, Hepcats and an Aardvark.

1994 and 1995.

Wait for it.

DAVE SIM, MARTIN WAGNER, JAMES OWEN AND COLLEEN DORAN — *CAPITAL CITY TRADE SHOW.* PHOTO BY: JOHN JUDGE, *RIVERCITY COMICS.*

CEREBUS

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